

## **Rhode Island's Citizen Review Panel –**

The Department of Children, Youth and Families will examine current operational definitions of emotional abuse in order to determine if revisions should be made that would allow a more comprehensive and preventive focus on situations in which emotional abuse is suspected.

In determining to undertake this review, the DCYF accepts the recommendation made by the Rhode Island Citizen Review Panel in its annual report to the Department in June 2004. DCYF Director Jay G. Lindgren, Jr. points out that the issues raised in the Citizen Review Panel report “regarding the lack of a prevention focused definition of emotional abuse, either in the general laws or in the Department’s operational definition, certainly do invite further debate and determination relative to systems issues and best practices. The critical emphasis on prevention in an effort to protect the resilient nature of children and promote their well-being and healthy functioning strikes a resonant chord in light of the escalating emotional disturbances that are creating greater and greater reliance on higher-intensive levels of treatment for children and youth receiving child welfare services.”

The Department of Children, Youth and Families established the Citizen Review Panel pursuant to sections 106(c)(4)(A)(i) and (ii) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). This panel is lead by Dr. Carole Jenny, of the Hasbro Child Protection Program, with volunteer members who are broadly representative of the fields of health and human services and law enforcement, particularly emphasizing expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The participants on the Citizen Review Panel will vary depending on issues that are being reviewed, but the core team of the CRP consists of:

- Administrators and Supervisors of DCYF Child Protective Services
- Hasbro Children’s Hospital personnel
- Representatives from the Attorney General’s Office
- Representatives from state and local law enforcement, including the Youth Services Bureau of the Providence Police Department
- Representatives of the Children’s Advocacy Center of the Sexual Assault and Trauma Resource Center

This Citizen Review Panel works closely with DCYF’s Child Protective Services Division to assist in determining whether cases of child abuse may have actually been accidental or intentional. The Citizen Review Panel also provides a forum for representatives of multiple disciplines to discuss complicated cases and receive guidance in making appropriate determinations regarding such cases where the presenting evidence is ambiguous.

The Citizen Review Panel also evaluates the extent to which DCYF is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with its CAPTA State Plan by: 1) examining the policies and procedures of the DCYF Child Protective Services Division, and 2) reviewing specific cases, where appropriate.

A full report of the Citizen Review Panel’s activities is provided to DCYF annually. The results of the report for fiscal year 2004 is included here: